REMARKS

The Examiner objected to the claims 1-20 as being anticipated by Benowitz et al. (US Publication No. 2003/0236847). The Applicant respectfully traverses this objection.

Benowitz et al. is directed towards a communication authorization system ("CAS") that determines whether incoming communications should be allowed to reach the intended recipient by checking the communication for a proper communication authorization code. The communication authorization code is a code set by the CAS and communicated to the sender for inclusion in any communications sent by the sender. The CAS includes an authorization code system that maintains, administers and transmits the authorization codes to future senders (paras. 71-73). The CAS does not store sender information in at least one recipient permitted sender database, nor store sender information associated with all members of a recipient group in at least one recipient group permitted sender database. The CAS does maintain lists of codes containing groups or categories of authorized codes (para. 85). The CAS includes mail boxes for receiving and maintaining email messages dependent upon the authorization code provided with the email. As described, two mail boxes may be provided, one for authorized email and a second for email with invalid codes or missing codes (para. 86). If a valid authorization code is included in the communication, the communication is allowed by the CAS to pass through to the intended recipient. If there is no valid authorization code in the communication, the CAS will compare the email information with an exclusion list that may be associated with a user, or follow system defined rules that control when an email is allowed to be authorized (para. 87). If an email matches information on the exclusion list, it is also passed through to the intended recipient. A risk of using such an exclusion list, is that a spammer could bypass the CAS if it is able to obtain any of the addresses contained in the exclusion list (para. 88).

The present invention does not rely upon pre-determined authorization codes to authenticate incoming communications. Further, the present invention does not screen all communications to only permit communications containing either a pre-determined authorization code or that was sent from an address on an exclusion list to be forwarded through to the intended recipient. The present invention provides for a system for blocking email messages wherein an incoming message is forwarded through to the intended recipient if the sender information in the message

matches sender information in either the recipient's permitted sender database, or sender information in at least one recipient group permitted sender database of which the recipient is a member. Thus, the present invention allows for the receipt of an email where either the recipient has approved the sender, or else a member of the recipient group has approved the sender. The present invention does not require the sender to include an authorisation code in his/her email.

The applicant notes that claim 2 further provides for adding sender information to the recipient permitted sender database if the sender information matches sender information stored in the recipient group permitted sender database, but does not match sender information stored in the recipient permitted sender database. Benowitz et al. does not provide for the updating of one sender information database based upon the content of a group sender information database, since Benowitz et al. rely upon authorisation codes and not the matching of sender information in either the recipient's permitted sender database, or sender information in at least one recipient group sender database of which the recipient is a member.

The applicant submits that Benowitz et al. does not disclose the use of a recipient group permitted sender database for determining whether a communication should be forwarded to the intended recipient. The applicant requests that the Examiner withdraw this objection.

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